

indeed, all over the world. It leads countries to greatness and men and women to their highest aspirations. We look forward to hearing his comments later this morning.

It is clear this body will stand by the Iraqis, will help them build a free, prosperous, and democratic Iraq. Their future, indeed, our security and the security of civilized people everywhere depends on it.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I also certainly wish the President the best of luck at the United Nations today. I think it is extremely important we have more support from the international community. I am very happy to see the President going there seeking that help.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business not to exceed 60 minutes, with Senators permitted to speak therein, with the first 30 minutes under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee, and the remaining 30 minutes under the control of the Senator from Texas, Mrs. HUTCHISON, or her designee.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BENNETT. I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to proceed for 15 minutes on the Republican time.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I have no objection, but I will indicate that I desire to follow the distinguished Senator from Utah. I will seek recognition at that time for another 4 to 6 minutes.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Does the Senator seek unanimous consent at this time?

Mr. WARNER. Yes.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from Virginia will be recognized following the Senator from Utah.

The Senator from Utah is recognized.

#### A CHARGE AGAINST THE PRESIDENT

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, over the weekend the country heard one of the more senior Members of this body, the senior Senator from Massachusetts, make a charge against the President of the United States, particularly with respect to the war in Iraq.

The senior Senator from Massachusetts said the war in Iraq was "hatched in Texas" in a conversation between the President of the United States and the Republican leadership and that the purpose of attacking Iraq was to help the Republicans politically in the congressional elections of 2002. The Senator from Massachusetts summarized the President's position with respect to the war in a single word. He called it a "fraud."

To quote a comment from the Washington Post in another situation dealing with Iraq, this is a serious charge and it deserves a serious response. It is my attempt today to give a serious response to this charge.

If the charge made by the senior Senator from Massachusetts is accurate, then the President is deserving of a serious rebuke. If in fact the charge is not accurate, the senior Senator from Massachusetts is deserving of a serious rebuke.

I intend to examine whether or not the charge could be substantiated and give it the attention that I think it does in fact deserve.

I will turn not to sources that are friendly to the President of the United States; I will go in my analysis to those who have been critical of President Bush with respect to Iraq and to his Presidency generally.

Let me start by quoting a Presidential statement with respect to Iraq:

Saddam Hussein's priorities are painfully clear, not caring for his citizens but building weapons of mass destruction and using them—using them not once, but repeatedly in the terrible war Iraq fought with Iran, and not only against combatants but against civilians, and not only against a foreign adversary but against his own people, and he has targeted Scud missiles against fellow Arabs in Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain.

Nobody wants to use force, but if Saddam Hussein refuses to keep his commitments to the international community, we must be prepared to deal directly with the threat these weapons pose to the Iraqi people, to Iraq's neighbors, and to the rest of the world. Either Saddam acts, or we will have to.

As I say, that was a Presidential quote, but it was not from George W. Bush, and it was not after a meeting in Texas between George W. Bush and Republican leaders. That was a statement made by President William Jefferson Clinton on February 20, 1998—long before the congressional elections of 2002 and 2 years before George W. Bush became President of the United States.

The suggestion that President Bush created the fraud or the specter that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction does not stand up against that statement by President Clinton.

I make reference to the Washington Post. This is a newspaper that is not known for its support of either Republicans or President Bush. But they were a supporter of attacking Iraq and, as I have said, there were those who charged the Washington Post editors with a "jingoistic rush to war," and the paper said, as I have noted:

That is a serious charge and it deserves a serious response.

Then the paper goes on to make these comments:

In fact, there is nothing sudden or precipitous about our view that Saddam Hussein poses a grave danger.

Quoting further:

In 1997 and 1998, we strongly backed President Clinton when he vowed that Iraq must finally honor its commitments to the United Nations to give up its nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, and we strongly criticized him when he retreated from those vows.

Again, that was a comment made after the supposed meeting in Texas and made after the congressional elections of 2002. If, indeed, President Bush made the decision to go into Iraq for purely political reasons, why would the Washington Post, which is not one of President Bush's supporters, be commenting after those congressional elections in a way that makes it clear they came to the same conclusion that President Bush did?

Would the Senator from Massachusetts suggest that the Washington Post was part of the conspiracy that went on in Texas prior to the congressional elections, and that the Washington Post was complicit in the fraud visited on the American people by the decision to go ahead in Iraq?

The Post editorial goes on, and this was February 27, 2003:

When we cite Mr. Clinton's perceptive but ultimately empty comments, it is in part to chide him and other Democrats who take a different view now that a Republican is in charge. But it has a more serious purpose, too. Mr. Clinton could not muster the will, or the domestic or international support, to force Saddam Hussein to live up to the promises he had made in 1991, though even then the danger was well understood.

We need not stay within our shores to find those who believe the President made the right decision in Iraq. Let us go overseas. I had occasion to visit with a group of European Parliamentarians. One of them, who came from Great Britain, made this comment to me. He said they have never had a politician in Great Britain who is as poll-driven as Tony Blair, and they never had one who pays so much attention to focus groups. The man said Tony Blair almost allows focus groups to determine what kind of tie he will wear in the morning. Yet when we come to this Iraq business, said this particular Parliamentarian, Tony Blair is going against all of the polls and all of the focus groups. He is acting in a manner that is completely uncharacteristic for him as a politician. He is actually willing to risk his position as Prime Minister in order to make sure we go after Saddam Hussein. He said they cannot understand it, except on one possible basis, and that is that Tony Blair must be completely convinced that the information is correct, that the intelligence is right, and that Saddam Hussein does indeed pose a threat. He said that there is otherwise no explanation for the way he is behaving, that it is contrary to his entire political experience.

Would the senior Senator from Massachusetts suggest that Tony Blair was